



New Jersey Association for Gifted Children

To: NJ State Board of Education
From: Roberta K. Braverman, Advocacy Vice President, njagc@njagc.org
Date: May 16, 2007

#5

OFFICERS

Elaine Mendelow
President

Donna Vaupel
VP Programs

Roberta Braverman
VP Advocacy

Elaine Mendelow
VP Publications

Anne DiGiuseppe
VP Membership

Loretta Kumpf
Corresponding Secretary

Miriam Hlawatsch
Recording Secretary

Tom Smith
Treasurer

Patti Coughlan
*Immediate
Past President*

Judy Petillo
Educator Chair

Lisa Rabke
Parent Chair

As some of you may remember, seven people spoke at your February 21 public hearings about needs for improving Gifted Education in New Jersey. Since that time, we have had no response from the Board, and no contact from the Commissioner's office other than a letter that I will read to you. NJAGC has been requesting two things: a follow up meeting with the Commissioner since she could not meet with us on November 29 at the last minute after rescheduling four times before, and your attention to the Findings of the Commission to Study Gifted Programs, first presented to you on July 20, 2005. At the time the report was received, during the last fifteen minutes of your work session, Dr. Hyndman said the chairs and members of the Commission would be invited back to discuss the report with the Board. Ms. Davy reports she is too busy to meet with us and no action or attention to gifted education needs has occurred in almost two years.

As you can see by the new organizational chart of the Department of Education, nowhere are gifted students or their teachers or academic programs mentioned. Nor is there support by specialized staff with training in gifted education. Thirty three other states have at least one full time person overseeing programs and services to advanced learners at the state education agency. Ms. Davy's response to NJAGC is unacceptable. Since we received her letter, NJAGC has sent over 500 signatures last month and have an additional 500 this month to deliver to Ms. Davy to continue to request that a qualified staff person is assigned to gifted education as his / her sole responsibility at the Department of Education. Copies have been sent to Governor Corzine and to the chairs of the Education Committees in the legislature. We will continue to speak out and need your help to make a difference soon.

Every major educational decision made for this state should consider these students as worthy of attention. Our teacher preparatory colleges offer no undergraduate courses in gifted education. Only a few graduate courses are available within the state and are not associated with any degree or certificated programs for educators. There are only a few lines of administrative code that are not well understood and not monitored that require local districts to identify and provide services to gifted students. This student population is being left behind.

From where should the leadership for gifted education originate? Surely the role of the all volunteer advocacy group of parents and educators for which I speak, NJAGC, should not be to remain the sole advisers to schools of their responsibility for gifted students or to provide the only training offered annually to educators. NJAGC needs a partnership with the Department of Education that you as board members should request and support. We need you to respond to the speakers who make the time to be here. We need you to take action, to make gifted education part of your strategic plan, as it once was several years ago, but faded from view before resolving the inadequacies.

NJAGC is working on several fronts. We have and will continue to approach the legislative leaders to create a funding source for gifted programs. A new bill will take a minimum of a year to put into effect. You can make a difference sooner. Within the Department of Education's established structures of professional development, student services, Best Practices, QSAC, academic standards, advanced placement, and early childhood, there needs to be an awareness of gifted education and support for accommodations for gifted students. Without the pestering of concerned parents and educators, this population continues to be ignored. Frequent communication originating from our Department of Education leaders to local districts is necessary to guide decision makers to assure appropriate services for gifted students as well as to share opportunities and strategies for students and their teachers.

[page 1 of 2]

P.O. Box 667 Mount Laurel, NJ 08054
<http://njagc.org>

856-273-7530 (voice mail)
njagc@njagc.org

Ignore this precious resource that we have in New Jersey's talented children and their untapped potential and it will go away. Those who can afford to will leave public schools that do not develop and provide for the needs of their gifted students. Until someone on the Board speaks up for gifted children, we can expect the same problems to arise as parents seek better schools and services for their able learners. Many schools in fear of failing requirements of NCLB focus strictly on remediation. Some districts provide no services and do not identify gifted students. Some districts provide excellent gifted programs but even those are in jeopardy. As budget dollars get tighter due to caps and other state imposed rules, this population of students is the first to lose services and programs. You are allowing gross inequities among schools by not assuming leadership through our Department of Education.

NJAGC receives calls, emails and posts on our web site www.njagc.org from parents desperate for appropriate placement and challenging work for their gifted children. Our Department of Education has no data on what schools are doing, how many students are identified and served, nor do you know of the programs, number of staff, or accommodations made for gifted students. I urge you to right this wrong for our students. The children who cannot flourish in their school environments will learn to be bored, restless, and dissatisfied with education. New Jersey can do better. We need your help to make it happen.

For more information:

www.njagc.org New Jersey Association for Gifted Children

National Association for Gifted Children www.nagc.org

Commission Report www.state.nj.us/njded/educators/commission/gifted.pdf

NJ Dept of Education Gifted and Talented

attachments:

letter from Commissioner Lucille Davy to NJAGC

Comments posted online about Gifted and the DOE

Gifted and Talented Requirements for the State of New Jersey



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PO Box 500
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

JON S. CORZINE
Governor

March 15, 2007

LUCILLE E. DAVY
Commissioner

Ms. Roberta Braverman
33 Westbury Drive
Cherry Hill, NJ 08003-1017

Dear Ms. Braverman:

Governor Jon S. Corzine has asked me to respond to your letter regarding gifted education in our state. In your letter, you ask that a full-time position be created at the Department of Education to coordinate gifted and talented programs.

The department is currently undergoing a reorganization which will eliminate the regional offices. Staff in those offices will be assigned new responsibilities. Additionally, there is no dedicated state or federal funding source to hire a full-time gifted education specialist. We anticipate that responsibility for gifted and talented programs will remain in the Office of Academic Standards, and that Dale Schmid, coordinator, visual and performing arts, will serve as the primary point of contact. Currently, Jennifer Beaumont, in the Office of Vocational/Technical, Career, and Innovative Programs, coordinates the Advanced Placement (AP) Incentive Program and is the point of contact for AP-related issues.

It is our hope that this information is helpful to you, and we thank you for your continuing support of programs for gifted students.

Sincerely,

Lucille E. Davy
Commissioner

LED/JD/LLM/cb/r:bravermanrobe
c: Governor Jon S. Corzine
Willa Spicer
Jay Doolan
William King
Linda Morse
Rochelle Hendricks
Dale Schmid
Jennifer Beaumont
Albert Monillas

www.nj.gov/education

New Jersey Is An Equal Opportunity Employer • Printed on Recycled and Recyclable Paper

Comments from parents online about gifted education:

Howell NJ Mom

My school district has tried to implement a more inclusive identification process and program which has resulted in the most divergent learners not being identified for services. While this is providing wonderful opportunities for students not previously served, it has really hurt the students with the greatest need for support services. The district now refuses to consider any evidence of exceptional intellectual ability in their identification and placement process even if parents obtained this evidence at their own expense. The parents that can afford to remove their children from the public schools are doing so, but families of limited means can't get any help for their students. Is this what the law intended?

"Closing the achievement gap by pushing down the top is like fostering fitness by outlawing marathons." – Helen Schinske

Leemig writes:

While I've read the June 2005 NJ gifted & talented requirements, and have reviewed the national standards, what is the law exactly regarding compliance (or in my district, non-compliance)? Is a district in violation of the law if they don't have a gifted program and what are the consequences if that's the case?

Any insight into this would be so helpful.

Another view:

At what point do you suggest contacting the DOE and what can they really do? It's my understanding they have very limited resources to deal with G&T issues.

To Whom It May Concern:

In reviewing the report on the cost of education, it appears that there has been no calculation to determine the cost differential for educating gifted and talented students. According to the NJDOE administrative code, these students have been determined to have significant educational needs and support services have been mandated under 6A:8-3.1(a) 5.

Services as outlined in this section of the administrative code mirror services required for special education students and create significant costs to LEA's attempting to comply. These costs include assessments for identification, administration, staffing, staff development (especially costly since there are no higher education institutions in NJ offering degrees in gifted education or a certification process for these teachers), implementation of grouping, curriculum development and supplies. The omission of specific funding attached to the education of gifted and talented students has created a situation in which the NJDOE and the legislature are encouraging LEA's to ignore the educational needs of these students and create "paper programs", i.e. ones that only exist on paper.

Any revision of the school funding formula should include specific funding for the adequate education of gifted and talented students in New Jersey as mandated in the Administrative Code.



Gifted and Talented Requirements

On June 1, 2005 the State Board of Education readopted with amendments N.J.A.C. 6A: 8, Standards and Assessment for Student Achievement, which includes more specific requirements for gifted and talented programs. Changes to the regulations are highlighted below in **bold**.

The regulations define gifted and talented students as:

Those students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability, in one or more content areas, when compared to their chronological peers in the local district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

Key Points

- All public schools must have a board-approved gifted and talented program.
- Students are to be compared with their peers in the local school district.
- District boards of education shall make provisions for an ongoing K-12 identification process for gifted and talented students that includes **multiple measures**, including but not limited to, achievement test scores, grades, student performance or products, intelligence testing, parent, student and/or teacher recommendation, and other appropriate measures.
- The regulations do not establish state-level criteria for giftedness (such as an IQ score or grade point average). Specific tests are not required to be used to identify gifted and talented students.
- Local school districts should ensure that the identification methodology used is developmentally appropriate, non-discriminatory, and related to the programs and services offered (e.g., use math achievement to identify students for a math program).
- N.J.A.C. 6A: 8-3.1(a)5 ii requires local district boards of education **to provide appropriate K-12 educational services for gifted and talented students**. Therefore, the identification process and appropriate educational challenges must begin in kindergarten.
- The rules require district boards of education to develop appropriate curricular and instructional modifications for gifted students. Programs must address appropriate content, process, products, and learning environment.
- **District boards of education shall take into consideration the PreK-Grade 12 Gifted Program Standards of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) in developing programs for gifted and talented students. The NAGC standards establish requisite and exemplary gifted program standards and can be accessed at <http://www.nagc.org/webprek12.html>.**
- Each curriculum framework developed by the department provides general as well as content-specific information on gifted education (e.g., terminology, examples of appropriate practices). The frameworks can be accessed at <http://www.nj.gov/njded/frameworks/> or at www.nj.gov/njded/aps/cccs.
- Local school districts will continue to be monitored as part of the regular school district evaluation process. Board-approved policies and procedures must be made available.

For more information, please contact:

North

Todd Flora
todd.flora@doe.state.nj.us
(973)655-2112

Central

Dale Schmid
dale.schmid@doe.state.nj.us
(609)984-6308

South

Nicholas Dotoli
nicholas.dotoli@doe.state.nj.us
(856)468-5530 ext. 6083



NJAGC ADVOCACY UPDATE TOP ISSUES FOR SPRING, 2007

- 1) SEEKING ACTION ON THE REPORT OF THE GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION TO STUDY GIFTED PROGRAMS, PRESENTED TO STATE BOARD IN JULY, 2005,
The full report can be found online at
<http://www.state.nj.us/njded/educators/commission/gifted.pdf>
- 2) ASSURING GIFTED EDUCATION HAS A HOME IN TRENTON AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION WHEN THE THREE REGIONAL OFFICES OF DOE NO LONGER EXIST, REQUESTING A FULL TIME PERSON ASSIGNED TO GIFTED EDUCATION.
- 3) SUPPORTING THE ESTABLISHMENT AND STRENGTHENING OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GIFTED ADVOCACY GROUPS, CREATING AFFILIATES OF NJAGC, BRINGING PRESENTERS TO YOUR AREA FOR MEETINGS
- 4) ASSURING THE JAVITS ACT IS RESTORED TO THE FEDERAL BUDGET [ESEA/ NCLB] FOR EDUCATION, SUPPORTS RESEARCH AND GRANTS TO STATES
- 5) RESEARCH / PROPOSE LEGISLATION TO STRENGTHEN SERVICES TO GIFTED STUDENTS IN OUR STATE [CURRENTLY NO \$\$ SJR-24 / AJR-131 GIFTED ED'N MONTH EVERY MARCH IN PROGRESS]
- 6) BUILD COALITIONS WITH OTHER GROUPS [PTA, SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION, PRINCIPALS AND SUPERVISORS ASSOCIATIONS, GUIDANCE COUNSELORS, SPECIAL EDUCATION GROUPS, CURRICULUM BY SUBJECT - SUCH AS MATH TEACHERS GROUPS, ETC.]
- 7) MAINTAIN ONLINE COMMUNICATION IN NJAGC FORUMS, KEEPING CURRENT WITH ARTICLES IN THE PRESS ABOUT GIFTED EDUCATION
- 8) ADVOCACY EVENT IN MAY, 2007 IF GRANT RECEIVED BY NAGC, WE NEED YOU THERE!

CONTACT NJAGC@NJAGC.ORG FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO OFFER HELP

KEEP CURRENT ON ADVOCACY FORUMS AND NJAGC NEWS AT WWW.NJAGC.ORG

Top Ten Advocacy Tips for Success with Gifted Education

10. **Know the jargon.** Learn online. Try www.hoagiesgifted.org Be ready to converse about NCLB, AYP, NJ-ASK or NJ-GEPA, NJCCCS, IQ, WISC, STANFORD- LM
9. **Keep your eyes and ears focused** on issues that may impact gifted students and programs or services. Many trends or issues such as caps and taxes could hurt!
8. **Be a member / volunteer**, get active in NJAGC, school committees, local or regional support groups. Help NJAGC to form coalitions with other groups.
7. **Share successes and challenges.** Remember, you are not alone. There is help out there and a network of caring folks who will listen and help.
6. **Find, know, and contact your elected officials**, by districts.

Congress (1 Representative, <http://www.house.gov/house/MemStateSearch.shtml>
2 NJ Senators= Frank Lautenberg lautenberg.senate.gov/contact/ &
Bob Menendez menendez.senate.gov/contact/contact.cfm

State Representatives <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/members/legsearch.asp>
One NJ Senator, two Assemblypersons
5. **Write or speak on issues relating to gifted children** in New Jersey, especially to Governor Corzine <http://www.state.nj.us/governor/govmail.html>
NJ State Board of Education (monthly hearings in Trenton, third Weds., 3 pm)
<http://www.state.nj.us/njded/sboe/meetings/>
4. **Read / contribute** to *Promise* and to www.njagc.org web site.
3. **Keep current through emails**, NJAGC forums (online bulletin boards), News Net.
NJAGC needs to have your email address to send alerts when *Promise* is online and to send members monthly updates and links to contests and events.
2. **Do not doubt that your voice can / will make a difference.** Know you are needed.
1. **Never give up** when working to assure the best education possible for your /our gifted children in New Jersey!

Stay in touch with njagc@njagc.org Contact Roberta Braverman, NJAGC Advocacy VP

